

Woonsocket Company's No. 1 Mill  
110 Front Street (west corner Court  
and Front Streets)  
Woonsocket  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-300

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-300

## WOONSOCKET COMPANY'S NO. 1 MILL

Location: 110 Front Street (west corner Court and Front Streets), Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island.  
Geographic Location Code: 38 - 0260 - 007  
Latitude: 42° 00' 06" N Longitude: 71° 30' 45" W  
(approximate location)

Present Owner: Blackstone Valley Electric Co., 100 Front Street, Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Present Occupant: Blackstone Valley Electric Co.

Present Use: Equipment storage.

Statement of Significance: This 1829 building is a typical Rhode Island stone cotton mill of the first half of the 19th century. It is the oldest building on the site.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Original and subsequent owners:

Russell Manufacturing Company (Daniel A. Daniels and Jonathan Russell): 1829-1832.

Woonsocket Company (chartered 1832): 1833 - April, 1883.

Trustees: Royal C. Taft (Providence), Joseph E. Cole and John W. Willis (Woonsocket): April, 1883 - June 1, 1883.

R. I. Hospital Trust Company: June 1, 1883 - April, 1887.

John C. Wyman: April, 1887 - June 27, 1887.

Woonsocket Electric Machine and Power Company (now Blackstone Valley Electric Co.): June 27, 1887 - present.

## 2. Date of erection: 1829.

3. Original plans, construction: The original plan was a rectangle 112'-8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 45'-8". The building was three stories high with a basement and attic and was constructed of stone exterior load-bearing walls and slow-burning interior framing.

4. Alterations and additions:

Addition (three bays) north end; between 1851 and 1855.

Breast wheels removed; probably 1859 when No. 4 Mill built with north wheel house.

Belfry removed from tower c. 1870.

Brick engine and generator foundations added 1887 (when building converted to generating station).

Miscellaneous partitioning; various dates 1887 to present.

Wheel pit and partial basement filled at north end, probably 1887.

Headrace entrance on west filled, probably 1887.

Elevator with brick penthouse northeast corner, c. 1900.

Office and stairways added to fourth floor, c. 1960.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

The Woonsocket Company's Mills, Woonsocket, Providence County, R. I. Interpretive Chronology of Corporate and Physical Events.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| 1827   | Daniel A. Daniels purchased site from James Arnold.   |
| 1827-8 | With Jonathan Russell built cotton mill (No. 1) which operated as Russell Manufacturing Co.                                       |
| 1829   | Firm failed in depression.  |
| 1831   | Property bought by Sullivan Dorr & Crawford Allen (brother of Zachariah). Samuel Greene appointed agent (until death, 1868).      |
| 1832   | Firm chartered as Woonsocket Company.   |
| 1833   | No. 2 Mill built. About this time name of village changed from Danville to Bernon after the French Huguenot, a relative of Allen. |

- c. 1835 No. 3 Mill built on northwest corner of No. 2.  
Power taken from No. 2.
- 1846 Capacity: 11,500 spindles; 288 looms; 250 hands.  
500,000 lbs. of cotton per year made into 2,100,000  
yards of print cloth. (Woonsocket totalled 20  
mills with capacity of c. 49,000 spindles.)
- 1851-55 Sometime in this period No. 1 Mill lengthened  
three bays toward river.
- 1859 No. 4 Mill built north of No. 1, with own wheel  
house. Like others, stone, four stories.
- 1867 New Bernon dam built, \$30,000, 195' long.
- 1869 Capacity given as same for 1846 but production up  
to 3,000,000 yds./year. Two water wheels in  
No. 2 Mill and one each in Nos. 1 and 4 Mills.
- 1871 Crawford Allen died; management taken over by  
Moses B. I. Goddard who enlarged and improved  
the plant.
- 1872 Steam power applied. Possibly this was the time  
when the breast wheels were replaced by vertical  
turbines.
- 1876 Capacity: 15,000 spindles; 337 looms; 300 hands.
- 1883 Firm failed; sold to trustees for \$225,000,  
including all land, improvements and water rights.
- 1887 Same purchased by Woonsocket Electric Machine &  
Power Co., the local lighting utility (in c. 1883).  
Engines and dynamos installed in No. 1 Mill.  
300 HP of water power supplemented by steam,  
supplying incandescent and street arc lamps.
- c. 1888 Power company leased No. 2 Mill to Valley Falls  
Mills as cotton print cloth weavery. 340 looms;  
60 hands.
- c. 1888 No. 5 building built as engine and boiler house,  
south of No. 1 Mill, stone and frame upper story.
- c. 1890 Brick Boiler house with four 140 HP horizontal  
boilers built contiguous with Nos. 1 and 5, on  
river side. 140' chimney.

- 1892           Occupancy: No. 1: Woonsocket Electric Machine & Power Co., two floors for generating; Miller Press & Machine Co., one floor. Nos. 2 and 3: Valley Falls Co., weaving and spinning attic of No. 2. No. 4: Simson & Kirkaldy Worsted Manufactory, weaving and finishing.
- 1898           Occupancy: Same except No. 4 used partially for storage only.
- c. 1900       No. 3 Mill demolished; replaced by brick steam station on river between Nos. 2 and 5. Two 750 HP engine-generators; eight horizontal boilers; 150' chimney. Station contiguous to No. 5 building, separate from No. 2 Mill.
- 1903           Reliance Worsted in No. 4; other occupancy same.
- pre-1911      River bank filled c. 30'; steam station extended same amount west; boiler house addition contiguous to and between steam station and No. 2; two 800 kW steam turbines added; brick boiler house west of No. 1 and boiler house section west end of No. 5 razed; two unit hydroelectric station (concrete) built between old headrace and river south of No. 2. Probably at this time all water turbines removed from Nos. 2 and 4.
- 1911           Occupancy: Woonsocket Electric Machine & Power Co. entire No. 1 and steam station; No. 2: Macrodi Fibre Co. and Woonsocket Spinning Co.; No. 4: Perforated Pad Co. Engines and dynamos out of No. 1.
- 1920s         Transformer house and substation built northwest corner steam station. Occupancies same except Macrodi Fibre absorbed by Manchester Co., manufacturers of cotton and worsted goods. No. 1: offices, shops and storage by Blackstone Valley Gas & Electric Co. (new name for the old Woonsocket Electric Machine & Power Co.).
- 1930s  
through 40s   All generating equipment and boilers removed from steam station. No. 1 Mill: no changes except superficial interior remodeling. No. 2 Mill: Apex Weaving Co. (rayon goods). Freight elevator added east end; brick office wing added.
- 1963           No. 2 Mill bought from Blackstone Valley Gas & Electric Co. by Gerard Hemond, present owner.
- 1968           No. 4 Mill used for storage and shops. Hydroelectric station abandoned.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Factory Mutual Insurance Company, Engineering Division.  
"Woonsocket Company's Mills Bernon, R. I.," (Insurance plat and perspective of mills). Norwood, Mass.: c. 1870. Sheet No. 449, bound in album.

Smithfield Town Records and Woonsocket City Records,  
Woonsocket City Hall.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Ballou's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion. Vol. 9, No. 7 (18 August 1855). pp. 104-105.

River view of Mills and brief description of the Woonsocket Company.

Bayles, Richard M. History of Providence County Rhode Island. New York: 1891. (2 Vols.). Vol II, pp. 305-306.

Charter of the Woonsocket Company. Providence: 1832. 4 pp.  
Copy in the Rhode Island collection, Providence Public Library.

Everts and Richards. New Topographical Atlas of Providence County, R. I. Philadelphia: 1895. pl. 156.

Keith, H. F. Map of the Town of Woonsocket and its Vicinity. 1869. (1" = 800')

Newman, S. C. A Numbering of the Inhabitants: Together With Statistical and Other Information Relative to Woonsocket, R. I. Woonsocket: 1846. (55 pp.). p. 41.

Parsons, A. F. Industries and Wealth of the Principle Points in R. I. New York: 1892. p. 241.

Pease and Niles. Gazetteer of Connecticut and Rhode Island. 1819. (With additions, Woonsocket Map c. 1835.)

Richardson, E. History of Woonsocket. Woonsocket: 1876. pp. 155-157.

Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Atlas of Woonsocket, Providence County, R. I. New York: 1892 (pl. 15); 1898 (pl. 14); 1903 (pl. 27); 1911. (Scale: 1" = 50')

Walling's Map of Providence County, R. I. 1851.

Copies at Library of Congress; Providence Public Library.

Webb's New England Railway and Manufacturers' Statistical Gazetteer. Providence: 1869. p. 473.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This 1829 building is a typical Rhode Island stone cotton mill of the first half of the 19th century. It is the oldest building on the site.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 137'-8" x 45'-8"; fifteen (15) bays, three (3) aisles; three (3) stories plus basement and attic; rectangular in shape.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Uncoursed granite, with quarry-faced granite lintels and sills. Slow-burning timber construction.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Southwest corner -- loading dock.
5. Chimneys: None.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Wood frames in masonry openings. Wood panelled doors. Attic story machinery service door probably original.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Wood frames in masonry openings. Wood double-hung sash originally 6/6; recent sash 2/2.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with continuous clerestory; asphalt shingles (recent).
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Wood cornice; open to interior at eaves.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Stair tower south elevation (terminates below gable peak). Brick elevator tower northeast corner. Original belfry over stair tower removed, c. 1870.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Original floor plans were open, with two rows of columns dividing the space into three aisles, except at the attic level where the span was clear. There are now miscellaneous non-structural wood partitions on all floors.
2. Stairways: One (1) main stairway at south entrance tower. Other stairways have been added at several locations on the interior.
3. Flooring: Wood wearing surface over structural plank. Recent tile in office. Concrete floor in basement.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls: plaster on masonry. Ceilings: exposed framing except in offices.
5. Doorways and doors: Wood, recent; except attic machinery door noted above.
6. Decorative features and trim: None.
7. Notable hardware: None.
8. Mechanical equipment: Fluorescent lighting (recent). Steam pipe and radiators heating system (recent).

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The No. 1 Mill is oriented approximately north-south (actually north-northwest-south-southeast) on the steeply sloping east bank of the Blackstone River. The main entrance is on the south, the headrace was to the west and the tailrace to the north. The building is west of Front Street and separated from the buildings along the street by a parking lot. Woonsocket Company's No. 2 Mill is to the southwest and the Court Street Bridge is to the northeast.
2. Outbuildings: Additions and No. 4 Mill to the north and east. Additions and No. 3 Mill to the west.



Prepared by Robert M. Vogel and  
Ted Sande  
National Park Service  
August 1968, August 1971

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This building was recorded as part of the New England Textile Mill Survey II; which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service, and the Smithsonian Institution. The project was assisted by the Merrimack Valley Textile Museum, North Andover, Mass.; the Fall River Historical Society; and the Bristol Community College, Fall River, Mass. It was the second of two summer surveys whose purpose was to record representative examples of the buildings of the New England Textile industry.

The field work, historical research and record drawings were done in the summer of 1968 under the direction of Robert M. Vogel (Curator of Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution), Project Director; Professor Melvin M. Rotsch (Architect, Texas A & M University), Project Supervisor; and David L. Bouse (University of Nebraska), Peter S. Conrad (Yale University), Eric N. DeLony (Ohio State University), and Dennis W. Jacobs (University of Kansas), Student Assistant Architects.

Historic documentation and editing of the project data were done in the summer of 1971 by Ted Sande (Architect, University of Pennsylvania), under the auspices of the Historic American Engineering Record of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service.